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THE DIRECT RULE OF THE PEOPLE

BY GEORGE KENNAN

At no period, probably, in their history, have all classes of the American people been more generally wealthy and prosperous than they are to-day. Not only are professional men, railroad men, merchants, farmers, and factory operatives earning more than they ever earned before, but most of them are living more comfortably than ever before, and, at the same time, are saving a larger part than ever before of the money that they earn. Since 1870—that is, within a period of about forty years—the wealth of the United States has increased at a rate that is almost unrealizable, if not unbelievable. As the figures that measure this wealth run up into the millions and billions, and as it is difficult to grasp mentally the quantities that these figures stand for, I shall borrow from the chief of the Bureau of Statistics a simple illustration intended to show what a billion means.

We all know how rapidly an expert counter of coins will manipulate them. The experts of the Treasury Department, in Washington, count about four thousand silver dollars every hour, and keep it up all day long, working eight hours a day; then, an expert counter of coins will count thirty-two thousand silver dollars a day, and this is about his limit of speed. At that rate, he will count a million dollars in just a month. But a million is only the begin-

ning of the measurement of great figures. If this same man should go on counting silver dollars, at the same rate of speed, he would count only one hundred million of them in ten years. To count a billion, he would have to work hard, every day, for a period of one hundred and two years. When, therefore, reference is made to billions of dollars, as representing the earnings or savings of the American people, please remember that a billion is a thousand times as much as a million, and that to count a billion dollars would occupy the time of an expert accountant for more than a century.

Bearing this in mind, let us look at the increase in the earning capacity of the American people during the past forty years. I will take first farms, because a large part of the wealth of every nation is derived from the soil. How have the farmers prospered during our generation? The value of the wheat, corn, cotton, and other agricultural products, raised on the farms of the United States, in the twelve months ended December 31, 1870, was a little less than two billion dollars. The value of the same products raised in the twelve months ended December 31, 1912, was estimated at nine billions, or a sum that it would take nearly a thousand years to count. In 1870, nine billion dollars was the total value of all the farms in the United States. In 1911, American farms were valued at forty-one billions, a sum that it would take about four thousand years to count.

But perhaps farmers have been more prosperous than other people. Take, then, the next largest class, the laborers who work in factories and mills. In 1870, the industrial workers of the United States were earning, in wages, seven hundred and seventy-five million dollars a year. In 1911, they were earning three billion five hundred million dollars, or nearly five times as much.

Earnings, however, are largely used up in living expenses, and a farmer, mechanic, or merchant may earn a good deal without saving much. Has this been the case in the United States? When a man earns more than he needs for the payment of his living expenses, he usually puts his surplus cash in a bank. Bank deposits, therefore, show how fast a nation is getting ahead. In 1870, the individual deposits, in all the banks of the United States, were two billion dollars. In 1912, they had increased to

seventeen billions, or a sum that it would take one thousand seven hundred and thirty-four years to count.

It may be thought, perhaps, that this immense amount of surplus money is in possession of a comparatively small number of capitalists, and that the great mass of the people are relatively poor. Such, however, does not seem to be the case. Wealthy capitalists invest their money, for the most part, in stocks or bonds; and if they deposit it in banks, they put it in national banks or trust companies. The great mass of the people, on the other hand, and particularly the wage-earners, put their surplus cash into savings-banks, and the deposits in savings-banks, therefore, show how the common people are getting along. In 1870, the number of Americans who had savings-bank accounts was only one million six hundred thousand. In June, 1912, the number of such people had increased to more than ten million. In 1870, the total deposits in the savings-banks of the United States were only five hundred and fifty million dollars. In 1912, they had increased to four billion five hundred and fifty million, or a sum that it would take four hundred and sixty years to count. There has been an increase of two hundred and forty million dollars in savings-bank deposits in the last twelve months.

These figures, which are taken from the reports of the Bureau of Statistics and Comptroller of the Currency, seem to show conclusively that, in the last forty years, an overwhelming majority of the American people have not only raised their standard of living, but have increased enormously the amount of their earnings and savings. The population, in forty years, has doubled; but its earnings and savings have increased nearly fivefold. In 1870, the total wealth of the United States was estimated at thirty billion dollars. In 1911, it was officially estimated at one hundred and thirty billions, or a sum that it would take more than thirteen thousand years to count, at a speed rate of thirty thousand dollars a day.

One might naturally suppose that a people in the prosperous condition shown by these figures would be fairly well satisfied. Mechanics who earn three and a half billion dollars a year, farmers who earn nine billions; and poor people who have four and a half billion dollars in savings-banks, would seem to have little reason for complaint, and still less for finding fault with the government under which

such prosperity has been attained. Strangely enough, however, there seems to be more unrest and discontent in the United States to-day than at any time in recent years. Farmers complain that they are being kept poor by railroads and middle-men; railroad men and industrial workers strike for higher wages, on the ground that their present pay is insufficient; Socialists declare that the rich are growing richer while the poor are getting poorer; Mr. Roosevelt says that we must "have better economic conditions among the mass of our people" in order to escape revolution; and millions of people attack the Government as the power that is most to blame for a state of affairs that is assumed to be intolerable.

The general feeling that there is something wrong with our form of government is widely prevalent; that economic conditions in the United States are bad; that wealth is unequally distributed; that the common people are not getting their equitable share; and that the Government is primarily to blame.

It would not be difficult, perhaps, to show how, in a period of extraordinary and unparalleled prosperity, such a feeling as this has become prevalent. My object, however, in this paper, is not to explain the feeling, but to examine some of the methods by which it is proposed to improve the Government, and thus, presumably, make everybody contented and happy. Three of these methods, which have already been put in practice in many of our States, are known as the initiative, the referendum, and the recall. These measures are properly described as "progressive"; but, from a historical point of view, they should be called "reactionary," because they are a return to much earlier and more primitive methods. In the republics of Greece, in the free Russian cities of Novgorod and Pskof, and in most of the primitive communities whose records have come down to us, the people always legislated directly—generally by means of conventions or mass-meetings. Representative government, that is, legislation through delegates chosen by the people to act for them, is a much later invention. It is now proposed to abandon, in part, the new method, and go back to the old. The people, when they feel like it, are to make laws for themselves, just as they did in mediæval Russia and ancient Greece. They are also to have the right to discharge summarily, without impeach-

ment or trial, all of their elected officials, including even their representatives and the judges of their courts. This may be improvement, but it certainly is not progress in the sense of going forward to something new. They had the initiative and the recall in Novgorod the Great—the first Russian Republic—nearly eight hundred years ago; and there the people had power to recall even the Prince whom they had elected to serve as President. They had the initiative and the recall fourteen hundred years ago, in Athens; and there they recalled, among others, such men as Thucydides, Alcibiades, and Pericles. These measures, therefore, are not new; they are centuries old, and they have been abandoned almost everywhere except in Switzerland. Within the past few years, they have been revived in Australasia, and in some of our Western States, and there they are now being tried out again.

If we ask a Direct Ruler what he expects to accomplish by means of these measures, he will probably tell us that he expects to make the government more responsive to the wishes of the people; to break up machine politics and the rule of the bosses; to improve legislation; and, finally, in the words of Mr. Roosevelt, to bring about a “practical betterment of social and economic conditions throughout the land.” No one, of course, will deny that these are praiseworthy objects; but it is extremely doubtful whether they can be attained by the methods proposed.

What is the chief defect in our existing machinery of government? If we ask a Direct Ruler this question, he will probably say that the government does not represent the people; that the bosses, the corporations, and the privileged classes have secured control of it, and are using it for their own benefit, regardless of the people’s wishes and interests. But even if this be true, who is to blame for it? Is it due to a defect in our form of government, or is it the fault of the people themselves?

Any one who studies the figures of our recent elections must be convinced, I think, that if the people do not rule as fully and completely as they ought to rule, it is because they are too indolent, or too indifferent, to take the necessary trouble. In the primary elections in the State of New York last fall, only fifteen per cent. of the voters went to the polls. In Tioga County there were four thousand two hundred and forty-four voters; but only five hundred and

sixty-one of them took the trouble to vote. In the village of Cortland there were one thousand three hundred and forty-two voters and only one hundred and ninety-seven of them voted. Only ten per cent. of the voters went to the polls in Little Falls; only eight per cent. in Watertown; and only six per cent. in Ilion. How can people expect to rule, or to get good government, when five-sixths of them are so lethargic, or so indifferent, that they will not even go to the polls? The government falls into the hands of the bosses and the machine politicians simply because the people do not do their duty. It may be said that the primary elections, at which only nominations are made, are not important. But they are important. The people cannot expect to have good officials, or good government, unless they make good nominations.

The people, moreover, do not attend properly to their civic duties, even in matters of the utmost importance. In September, 1912, a general election was held in Ohio to vote on thirty-four radical amendments to the State constitution. Most of them were important, and one of them changed the constitutional law of the State with regard to the sale of intoxicating liquor. Less than one-half of the enrolled voters went to the polls, and the number who voted on the liquor-law amendment was only one-third of the total enrollment. The best imaginable form of self-government must necessarily be a failure when, in a great State like Ohio, five or six hundred thousand voters out of a million either decline to vote, or stay away from the polls altogether.

In a Republic like ours, nothing, certainly, can be more important than the choice of a President; and yet, in 1908, when Taft and Bryan were candidates, the number of voters who stayed away from the polls was more than seven million, or about one-third of the entire electorate. Even in the latest election, when Wilson, Roosevelt, and Taft were candidates, and when the popular interest was as great as it is ever likely to be, thirty voters out of every hundred stayed at home on Election day. There were about twenty-one million adult male citizens in the country, but only fifteen million voted. In Ohio last fall, they held a State convention for the purpose of drafting amendments to the State constitution. Only one-quarter of the voters went to the polls and voted for convention delegates. Out

of thirty-two legislative measures submitted to the people of Oregon at the general election of 1910, not a single one was adopted or rejected by a majority of the enrolled voters. And yet, in the face of such a record as this, the Progressives declare that our form of government must be changed because the people do not rule; but, as the Vice-President has recently said, "The people do rule, as fully as they take the trouble to rule; and when they take more trouble to rule, they will rule more."

One of the principal reasons for the failure of American citizens to vote is indifference. They are not generally interested in public questions that do not directly concern them. In the words of General Bingham, "The average citizen doesn't care until it hits him in his pocket, or in his home—hits him personally." President Taft may have made mistakes as Chief Executive of the nation; but he made no mistake when, four days before the recent election, he said to the students of Harvard, "The real solution of all our political difficulties is to be found in the stimulation of good citizenship. No machinery of any sort, whether by direct primary, referendum, initiative, or recall, will accomplish any real reform, unless the individual citizen himself is stirred to a better performance of his duty as a voter and as a member of his party. If the individual citizen improves his citizenship, then reform will follow, whether new machinery be adopted or not; and if the average standard of good citizenship is not improved, then new political machinery will not aid."

Many clear-sighted students of public affairs have expressed a similar opinion. In a recent address, Raymond B. Fosdick, former Commissioner of Accounts of New York, said that the great remedy for the evils that exist in New York is "personal and individual regeneration. There is no such thing as a civic 'presto change.' Permanent improvement in the quality of the government is dependent upon the quality of the people."

In a speech on the 28th of October last, President Creelman, of the Municipal Civil Service Commission, said: "We cannot carry on government by civil service commission. We must have an intelligent citizenship behind us. . . . What preparation does the voter, who selects the officers that make the policy of the government, make for the high function that he exercises?"

In a sermon preached in the Baltimore Cathedral, on the eve of the recent Presidential election, Cardinal Gibbons said: "It is my profound conviction that if ever the Republic is doomed to decay, if the future historian shall ever record the decline and fall of the American Republic, its downfall will be due, not to a hostile invasion, but to the indifference, lethargy, and apostasy of her own sons."

And yet, this indifference of the citizen, which vitally affects the interests, if it does not threaten the very existence, of the Republic, receives no attention whatever in the platform of any political party. All the platforms refer to the rights of the people, but not one to their *duties*. James Bryce, a clear-sighted and sympathetic student of American institutions, has pointed out, in the following words, one of the reasons for this general neglect of civic duty. "The enormous growth of modern States has made the share of the individual citizen seem infinitesimally small. In an average Greek republic, he was one of from two to ten thousand voters. In England or France to-day he is one of many millions. The chance that his vote will make any difference to the result is so slender that it seems negligible."

The Direct Rulers assert that our government is bad because the people do not control it; but the people do not make use of the remedies for existing evils that they already have. What good reason is there to suppose that they will continuously, persistently, and indefatigably make use of the new remedies that are now suggested? So long as such remedies are novel, and so long as the moral and civic enthusiasm that is characteristic of the present time lasts, universal primaries, the initiative, the referendum, the recall, and the various other panaceas that are proposed, will perhaps work well; but when this reform wave passes, when the people get tired, or perhaps disillusioned, and when they begin to neglect their civic duties again, the new machinery will grind out crooked bosses and crooked business just as the old machinery did. The evil-doers are always alert and active, because they live by it. They watch the representative machine constantly and, so far as possible, direct and control it. The people, on the other hand, are at one time in a fever of moral reform, and at another time in a chill of civic indifference. They supervise and direct the political machinery for a while, but then they

neglect it and the bosses get control. The people—or at least the Progressive people—seem to think now that if they secure universal primaries, the initiative, the referendum, and the recall, good government will come almost automatically; but it will not. The evil-doers will use the new agencies, if the people neglect them, just as they used the old. Mr. J. B. McClure, not long ago, declared that “a successful government must be neglect-proof;” but there is no possibility of making a government neglect-proof. Every human agency must have intelligent and incessant human control, and a neglect-proof government is no more practicable than a neglect-proof steam-engine, or a neglect-proof aeroplane. The price of good government is eternal vigilance, and for eternal vigilance the people of the United States have never yet shown the slightest capacity.

Ex - Attorney - General Wickersham recently suggested that the people be compelled to do their civic duty; that every man who fails to go to the polls and vote be punished. This remedy was tried in ancient Greece, has been tried more recently in Switzerland, and is now being tried in Argentina, but it has never worked satisfactorily. With us it would almost certainly fail, because we cannot control the non-voting citizen, even after we have caught him. You may drag a man to the polls, but if he is indifferent to the question that is submitted to him for judgment, he will deposit a blank ballot. Tens of thousands of voters in our Western States have already done this. In Oregon, it has been found impossible to get a majority vote on one measure out of ten. The threat of punishment may prevent a voter from staying at home, but it will not prevent him from depositing a blank ballot if he takes no interest in the question submitted to him for judgment.

Let us now consider the ability of the people to decide rightly and wisely the great number of measures which the initiative and the referendum will bring before them. Under the present system of government, a law is made by our representatives in the legislature, most of whom are educated or trained men. The proposed law, at first, takes the shape of a bill, which is formally introduced and is then referred to a standing committee. The members of this committee are supposed to be, and generally are, more or less familiar with the subject to which the bill relates. They discuss the bill in detail, and give hearings to all the peo-

ple who may happen to be interested in it. After listening to the arguments made for or against it by the people whose interests it affects, they make up their minds about it, and report it back to the House or Senate with a favorable or an unfavorable recommendation. The House or Senate then discusses it again—sometimes at great length—and finally passes it. When it has been acted upon in this way by one House, it goes to the other, where it follows a similar course. It does not finally become a law until it has been considered, debated, and adopted by both Houses. It may be a bad law, even then, but at least it has had deliberate investigation, consideration, and discussion.

Now contrast with this the method of law-making by initiative. In the first place, a bill is drawn up and a canvasser, or "circulator," is paid five, seven, or ten cents a name for getting signatures to it. When a few hundred or a few thousand others have signed it, it goes directly to the people for judgment. It has never been seriously considered or discussed by anybody, and it cannot be changed or amended. It may be partly good and partly bad, or it may come to the voter in such a shape that he cannot vote either "Yes" or "No" without putting himself in a false position. That makes no difference. He must take it as it is, and vote "Yes" or "No" on the question, "Will you take this bill for your law?" If, under these conditions, the bill is approved by a majority of the voters who go to the polls and vote on it, it immediately becomes law. Sometimes, however, only a few voters go to the polls, and in such cases the law is enacted by perhaps not more than one-third of the whole electorate. The majority of the people are then governed by a small minority. In the Oregon election of 1910, nine measures, viz., four constitutional amendments and five statutory laws, were submitted to the people and adopted by them. Not one of the nine received a majority of the total vote cast in the election.* In the Ohio election of September 3, 1912, forty-two measures, including thirty-four constitutional amendments, were submitted to the people for judgment. Less than half the voters of the State took the trouble to vote on them, one way or the other, and the initiative-and-referendum amendment was ratified by only twenty-five per cent of the whole

* Eaton's "Oregon System," p. 161.

electorate. One-quarter of the people, therefore, legislated for the other three-quarters.

But suppose that all of the voters go to the polls and vote on an initiated bill. What qualifications have they for deciding the questions that the bill presents? In the first place, they are asked to vote, not on one bill, but on twenty, or even forty, at the same time. In Oregon, last year, the people were asked to vote "Yes" or "No" on thirty-eight different bills or constitutional amendments, submitted all together, at a single election. On the same day they were asked to vote for or against more than one hundred different candidates for the various offices. The bills and amendments, with the explanation of them, made a closely printed book of two hundred and sixty pages, and the ballot was as big as a small tablecloth. How many voters read attentively that two-hundred-and-sixty-page book, and looked up the records, or ascertained the characters, of the candidates? Probably not one in a hundred—possibly not one in a thousand. In Pennsylvania, at the same election, the ballot for candidates contained nine columns, and in some of the States the voter had to mark a ticket that was something like six feet in length.

It needs no argument, I think, to prove that the average American voter will not take the trouble to read a book of two hundred and sixty pages, investigate the merits of thirty-eight different laws, look up the records of a hundred candidates, and then go to the polls and, in the words of a Western rhymester, "rassle with a ballot that is six feet over all." He will either shirk the whole business by staying at home, or, if he goes to the polls, will vote only on the few questions that he thinks he knows something about.

The majority of the people have neither the time nor the ability to study complicated questions of governmental policy. They are no more competent to decide them than the stockholders of a railroad would be to decide what type of locomotive should be used, what should be the maximum grade of the track in crossing a divide, what number of new passenger cars should be built every year, and what should be the freight rate on a carload of wheat from Bismarck to Minneapolis. The stockholders elect officers to decide these questions for them, and the officers make it their business to study railway administration and manage

the property in the best possible way. What would happen to a great corporation like the Pennsylvania Railroad, or the New York Central, if John Jones, a holder of ten shares of stock, could initiate and put through a law changing the classification of freight, regulating the salaries of employees, limiting the amount that might be spent for repairs and betterments, forbidding the erection of new station houses or terminals where they might be needed, or fixing the size and weight of steel rails to be used in replacements or new construction? A railroad so managed would go into bankruptcy in less than five years. But if John Jones, the stockholder, is incapable of managing a railroad, what good reason is there to suppose that John Jones, the voter, has ability enough to run a government?

Thousands of voters in our Western States deposit blank ballots simply because they do not know whether to vote for or against an initiated bill. If I were asked to vote on a proposal to substitute a tunnel for a steep grade, on the track of the Union Pacific Railway where it crosses the Sierra Nevadas, I should probably deposit a blank ballot myself, because I should have no means of knowing whether a tunnel would be better than a steep grade, or a steep grade better than a tunnel. And yet this would be a simple matter as compared with the question whether big trusts be broken up altogether or regulated by a government bureau—a question that might be submitted to me by the initiative or the referendum.

The advocates of direct popular rule say that the people will decide only "fundamental questions," leaving to the legislature the complex or technical details concerning which they—the people—know little or nothing. Waiving, however, the point, which might be made, that the decision of "fundamental questions" often calls for more knowledge and ability than the settlement of details—the history of direct popular legislation shows that the people are not at all disposed to confine themselves to fundamentals. Of the sixty-four questions submitted to the people of Oregon, since the adoption of direct popular government in that State, only twenty-nine, or less than one-half, can possibly be classed as fundamental. The Oregon people, moreover, have shown an increasing disposition to take questions of all kinds away from the legislature and settle them by

direct popular action. In 1904, only two measures were initiated or presented by referendum. In 1906, the number increased to eleven; in 1908 to eighteen; in 1910 to thirty-two; and in 1912 to thirty-eight. That the people had not knowledge enough to vote wisely on all of these questions is shown by the results in the single-tax case, the courts and judges case, and the case of the Rogue River fisheries.

If any voter will ask himself the question, "Have I knowledge enough to vote wisely on thirty-eight different measures submitted to me at a single election?" he will be forced to admit, I think, that he has not. I myself represent fairly, perhaps, the better informed half of a popular majority, and yet I am not at all sure that I could form a right judgment with regard to dozens of social, political, and economic problems that might be submitted to me under the initiative or the referendum. It is not only possible, but probable, that I, with millions of people like me, might go wrong on really vital questions, simply because I lacked information. Government, in a nation like ours, is a very complicated business, and the people—that is, the majority—have not knowledge enough to vote or act rightly in half the cases that may be presented to them. Popular judgments are as likely to be wrong as are the judgments of individuals. There is no virtue in mere numbers, and the fact that an erroneous opinion is held by an overwhelming popular majority does not make it any less erroneous.

Supporters of the initiative, the referendum, and the recall say that these measures will take the government out of the hands of corrupt or selfish bosses, and put it in the hands of the people where it properly belongs. But will this be the result? It seems to be more than doubtful. The bosses as well as the people can initiate bills and make recalls, and they are far more shrewd and resourceful than the people are in the art of political manipulation. The new machinery, moreover, affords as many opportunities for fraud as the old did. What is to prevent the bosses or the "interests" from initiating bills, hiring corrupt canvassers, and getting thousands of fictitious or fraudulent signatures to their petitions? In Oregon they have already done this. In a judicial investigation of the "spite" referendum on the appropriation for the State university, ten thousand out of thirteen thousand signatures were found to be fictitious or fraudulent.

In the city of Seattle, last fall, there was an anti-vice crusade, headed by the mayor and aided by a body of special police known as the "Purity Squad." The vicious interests of the city, very naturally, did not like it, and began a popular proceeding to remove the mayor by means of the recall. They offered a recall petition bearing the signatures of twenty-six thousand six hundred alleged citizens, but, upon investigation, all but about eight thousand of the signatures were found to be fraudulent. Meanwhile, a force of seventy-five clerks had spent two weeks in the work of verification.

Then, again, what is to prevent the bosses, or the interests, from framing their bills in such a way as to deceive and mislead the voter? This, also, they have done in Oregon. Four years ago, a bill was initiated there for the purpose of ultimately abolishing all taxes except the tax on land. The people defeated it by a vote of two to one. Two years later the same bill was reintroduced, but in a form which made its object seem to be the abolition of the unpopular poll-tax. The very same people who had defeated the bill in its original form adopted it in its amended form, simply because, in the second election, they were deceived as to its real object. This may happen with any piece of legislation. There seems to be no limit to the devices by which the bosses and the interests control the new machinery for their own purposes. The authorization of the recent constitutional convention in Ohio was apparently secured by means of a "joker" in the printing of the ballots—the words "Constitutional convention; Yes," in small type, being concealed in the middle of a huge blanket ballot, where the voter would not notice them unless his attention were particularly called to them. This joker is supposed to have been contrived by the labor interests, which afterward controlled the convention.

The evils of direct popular rule in Oregon, where it has been on trial for ten years, are summed up by one of its friends as follows:

1. The cost of direct legislation has been high in proportion to the results achieved.
2. The Oregon constitution has been seriously weakened, its safeguards entirely destroyed, and its very existence threatened, by a minority of the voters of the State.

3. The people have passed laws against their interests and their convictions. They have been fooled by men who claimed to trust the people, but who, afraid to submit measures honestly, so disguised them that they succeeded in passing.

4. The machinery of direct legislation has fallen into the hands of dishonest men, who for money and spite have abused the privilege of direct legislation, and who, in the name of the people, have misrepresented our citizenship and brought disgrace upon our State.*

What we need in the United States is not new political machinery, but a nation of good citizens, who will devote themselves, faithfully and conscientiously, to the duty of choosing good representatives. If the newspaper and magazine writers who, in the past five years, have devoted so much time and space to exposure of the evil deeds of bosses and corporations, had given an equal amount of time and space to the shortcomings of the voters, we might, possibly, have a better government than that which we now see.

No one has set forth more clearly the fundamental defects of direct popular rule than has the distinguished author of *The American Commonwealth*. In a recently published volume entitled *Hindrances to Good Citizenship*, Mr. Bryce says:

"The deficient sense of civic duty, though most frequently noted in the form of a neglect to vote, is really more general and serious in the neglect to think. Were it possible to have statistics to show what percentage of those who vote reflect upon the vote they have to give, there would in no country be found a large percentage. Yet what is the worth of a vote except as the expression of a considered opinion? The citizen owes it to the community to inform himself about the questions submitted to his decision, and to weigh the arguments on each side; or, if the issue be rather one of persons than of policies, to learn all he can regarding the merits of the candidates offered to his choice. But intelligence and independence of thought have not grown in proportion to the diffusion of knowledge. The number of persons who both read and vote, in England and in France, is twenty times as great as it was seventy years ago. The percentage of those who reflect before they vote has not kept pace either with popular education or with the extension of the suffrage. The persons who constitute that percentage are, and for the reasons already given must for some time continue to be, only a fraction—in some countries only a small fraction—of the voting population."

* Allen's "Oregon System," p. 128.

The reason why the average voter so often neglects his duty to think and vote is stated by Mr. Bryce as follows:

“A duty shared with many others seems less of a personal duty. If a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand other citizens are as much bound to speak, vote, or act, as each one of us is, the sense of obligation becomes to each one of us weak. Still weaker does it become when one perceives the neglect of others to do their duty. The need for the good citizen’s action, no doubt, then becomes all the greater. But it is only the best sort of citizen that feels it to be greater. The Average Man judges himself by the average standard, and does not see why he should take more trouble than his neighbors. Thus we arrive at the result summed up in the terrible dictum: ‘What is Everybody’s business is Nobody’s business.’ . . . The theory of universal suffrage assumes that the Average Citizen is an active, instructed, intelligent ruler of his country. The facts contradict this assumption.”

GEORGE KENNAN.